

The Protagonist's Quest for Finding Himself in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*

Jhumpa Lahiri'nin The Namesake İsimli Eserinde Kahramanın Kendini Bulma Arayışı

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Abstract

The Namesake (2003) was written by Jhumpa Lahiri. It tells the story of the Ganguli family, in which both the parents and the children have different experiences. Immigration is a pivotal point in the story's events. Namely, the characters need to find a balance between the changing social and cultural norms of their homeland and those of the host country. Accordingly, the themes of cultural clash and acculturation are found clearly in this story. Moreover, a close interaction between the protagonist's name(s) and the identity crisis attracts attention. The present study aims to reveal that there can be a close interaction between an individual's name and the identity development process. To this aim, the story of the protagonist, named Gogol/Nikhil, is examined, considering Homi Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and the third space. The details regarding the protagonist's name(s) and identity development process represented in *The Namesake* are assessed to elicit the influence of name(s) on an individual's sense of self. As a consequence of the research, it is detected that searching for identity is a challenging process for Gogol/Nikhil, and being Gogol or becoming Nikhil is his main conflict. Additionally, it is deduced that this conflict can be resolved only when he perceives the significance of his familial, socio-cultural, and national values in his personal life.

Keywords: Name-giving, Identity, Immigration, Culture, Dilemma.

Öz

The Namesake isimli roman Jhumpa Lahiri tarafından yazılmış ve 2003 yılında yayınlanmıştır. Romanda hem ebeveynlerin hem de çocukların farklı deneyimler yaşadığı Ganguli ailesinin hikâyesi anlatılmaktadır. Göç etme eylemi hikâyede meydana gelen olayların bir kilit noktasıdır. Şöyle ki, karakterler kendi vatanlarının ve ev sahibi ülkenin değişen sosyokültürel normları arasında dengeyi bulmaya gerek duymaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, kültürel çatışma ve kültürel etkileşim ile ilgili temalar hikâyede net bir şekilde yer almaktadır. Ayrıca, ana karakterin ismi/isimleri ve kimlik bunalımı arasındaki yakın ilişki dikkat çekmektedir. Bu bağlamda, mevcut çalışma bir bireyin ismi ve kimlik geliştirme süreci arasında yakın bir etkileşim olabileceğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, Gogol/Nikhil isimli ana karakterin hikâyesi Homi Bhabha'nın melezlik ve üçüncü mekân kavramları göz önünde bulundurularak incelenmiştir. *The Namesake* adlı eserde betimlenen ana karakterin isim(ler)i ve kimlik gelişim süreci ile ilgili detaylar isim(ler)in bireyin benlik algısı üzerindeki etkisini ortaya çıkarmak üzere değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda Gogol/Nikhil için kimlik arayışının uğraştırıcı bir süreç olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Gogol olmanın ya da Nikhil'a dönüşmenin ana karakterin başlıca çelişkisi olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca, bu çelişkinin ancak ana karakterin kendi ailevi, sosyokültürel ve milli değerlerinin kendi hayatı üzerindeki anlamının farkına vardığı zaman çözüme kavuşabileceği sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İsim Verme, Kimlik, Göç, Kültür, İkilem.

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Introduction

The Namesake was written by Jhumpa Lahiri and published in 2003. The novel tells the Ganguli family's story, in which both parents and children undergo different experiences. Following its publication, *The Namesake* (TN) has been acclaimed and gained international popularity. Becoming one of the best-known novels of Jhumpa Lahiri, "*The Namesake* is one of the national best-sellers and has been named as the 'Best Book of the Year' (2003) by the USA" (Bhelkar, 2015, p. 72). The novel focuses on the Indian people living in America and on some facts related to their struggles and experiences as they adapt to life in a foreign land following their immigration. It "is a story of culture, race, and inheritance and how these factors mold our attitudes and direct our lives in an ever-changing society" (Dawes, 2007, p. 2). Events and their consequences are depicted in conjunction with the parents' decision to sustain their lives in another country. Considering the issues revealed in the novel, Malik and Singh (2014) state that "it is a diasporic work which explores the identity crisis, racial and cultural conflicts, ethnicity, sense of belongingness, loneliness and alienation among the immigrants" (pp. 349-350). *The Namesake* portrays different social and familial factors that influence the characters' lives. In conjunction with these factors, as indicated by De (2007), a considerable part of Lahiri's narrative is dedicated to the fluidity of identity of the protagonist "through the ambiguity in his name" (p. 187). Thus, as a cultural phenomenon, name-giving is the most notable event, along with the issues of the generation gap, women's condition, children's condition, and the feeling of in-betweenness after immigration.

The story's narrative flow includes numerous issues which can be discussed critically. Among them, cultural clash, the feeling of in-betweenness, and hybridity between two cultures are points that can be analysed under Homi Bhabha's theory, emphasising hybridisation in the postcolonial context. In *Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha discusses the factors that shape identity in the modern world, focusing on the hybridity of individuals who are searching for their sense of self in between changing cultural and social norms of different societies. Identity formation can be challenging when an individual is confronted with fixed fundamental notions of traditional and modern or national and foreign cultural values. However, adaptation into a new process blending different values, norms, and perspectives can be possible through a third space, as defined by Bhabha (1994). Bhabha (1994) indicates "it is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (p. 37).

So, this concept offers a new ground for immigrant people in which "cultural enunciation can be ensured through the third space" (Yalvaç & Ayan, 2025, pp. 60-61) in which it is possible to mix the cultures of homeland and the host country. The combination of diverse cultural identities in the third space can give rise to a hybrid cultural identity, granting immigrants greater agency in their identity development. As Bhandari (2022) states, "the third space is a new space although it partially belongs to two preceding spaces. It departs momentarily from the established values and norms, and allows scrutinizing them with fresh perspectives" (p. 173). Rather than insisting on a homogeneous one, constructing a new cultural identity can be a solution to the identity crisis an immigrant person might face between the cultural values of the homeland and those of the host country. Hence, the interaction in the third space of enunciation, between different cultures, traditions, and norms, makes hybridity possible.

It is observed that "the novel deals with the story of two generations of an Indian Bengali family and their struggle to acculturate themselves in the Immigrant country" (Malik & Singh, 2014, p. 351). It can be seen that Lahiri handles the experiences of immigrants from different generations, which increases the multiplicity of character representations. This allows readers to confront various personal and interpersonal themes, which can be explored in the context of identity-related issues. As Raina (2017) also underlines, from the beginning to the end of the novel, members of the Gangulis are observed as separate cases and different versions searching for their real selves and striving to find answers to the inquiry regarding their identities (p. 118). The mentioned identity profiles interact intimately with their Indian-American living styles. The novel's scope includes themes related to immigration and immigrant characters' daily lives, and the focus of the story is mainly on the identity formation struggle of a male character going through various troubles stemming from his first name. Considering the topics revealed in the novel, Puri (2015) states that "Lahiri used Gogol's struggle over his name as jumping off point to explore large issues of integration, assimilation and cultural identity" (p. 32).

Identity is the key factor enabling an individual to have a place in social, familial, and personal domains. Malik and Singh (2014) state that “identity literally means a set of behavioural or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group” (p. 350). It is a complex pattern influenced by various factors, including an individual’s name. Lahiri fits the importance of a name into a character’s search for autonomous identity, which might satisfy him personally. As it is also underlined by Patel (2018), names have significant roles in the life of a person, because “persons are identified through their names” (p. 134). Personal satisfaction via a name can bring a sense of fulfilment in domestic, social, and professional life. Moreover, “the name is the first line of identity, suggesting something of nature, something of character of its bearer” (Bhelkar, 2015, p. 73). A person’s identity is a determining factor not only in personal life but also in social, domestic, and professional environments. The close relationship between names and identity development processes offers a wide range of topics which can be discussed critically. In fictional creations, authors can handle identity-related issues from changing perspectives, one of which is the interaction between names and the identity development processes of characters. Accordingly, Jhumpa Lahiri can be regarded as one of the significant authors clearly depicting the impact of names on the lives of individuals. A clear-cut representation is revealed in *The Namesake*. As emphasised by Dawes (2007), the novel’s main subject is identity which is “vividly illustrated by examining the importance of one’s name as the definition of patriarchal lineage, background, and gender as a means by which one’s destiny in life is dictated” (p. 3).

The present study aims to explore the potential for a close interaction between an individual’s name and the identity development process and to examine how Jhumpa Lahiri portrays the influence of a name on the protagonist’s identity development and his sense of self in *The Namesake*. In accordance with this aim, it focuses on the protagonist’s struggle to establish a meaningful bond with his name(s) and identity while experiencing cultural clash as the single son of Indian-origin parents immigrating to America. Accordingly, the first question is “what is the reason for the protagonist’s struggle to find his own sense of self?”, the second question is “how do cultural differences influence the identity development process of the protagonist?”, and the final question is “how can the protagonist find the solution for stabilising his dual identity?”. Through answering these questions, the current research endeavours to contribute to discussions about the place and importance of names in the development of characters’ identities in fictional works.

The Impact of Name(s) on the Protagonist’s Sense of Self

The novel’s focal point is the struggle stemming from a name that does not satisfy the protagonist psychologically, personally, and also socially. Considering *The Namesake*, Heinze (2007) underlines that “the entire novel hinges on a name: Gogol. Gogol is the protagonist and, beyond addressing obvious questions of personal identity, telling his story through a focus on his name reflects crucial issues of cultural identity, diaspora and multiculturalism” (p. 193). The protagonist has to cope with psychological, personal or social problems arising from his name all along the novel because he cannot be fully content with his name. In Gogol’s story, there is a relationship between personal and cultural identities, namely, “Gogol becomes a double, he has a doppelgänger, and with it two different histories, identities, affiliations, affections” (Heinze, 2007, p. 196). He suffers from his dual identity because Gogol is given another name, Nikhil, as a consequence of his parents’ cultural norms. His parents’ insistence on maintaining their traditional values in a foreign country causes Gogol to face changing difficulties. In this regard, as Dawes puts it (2007), the Ganguli family bring along numerous traditional values while immigrating to the United States (p. 9), and they try to implement them in their daily life following their immigration; however, this cultural transfer causes difficulty in identity formation process of their son since it is not easy for their son to make himself accepted among society and explore his own self. The source of the crisis, in terms of the central character, is primarily related to his first name, which does not satisfy him. According to Bhullar (2017), in the novel, “the author focuses on the critical issue of ‘Name,’ which is an important aspect of identity, and at the end; it is apparent that one cannot resolve the dilemma of name by just changing it on record. It is the tag, which a person has to live with throughout his life” (p. 36). Accordingly, the novel’s basic theme is the differences in the name-giving process and the importance of names in two different cultures, Indian and American. The incidents revolve around the naming process, which is an important traditional occasion in Indian culture, as reflected in the novel. A cultural clash regarding names and the name-giving process is represented vividly at the very beginning of the story.

The only son of the Ganguli family, Gogol is constantly seeking his own identity “while attempting to mold to his family’s expectations and the expectations of American society” (Dawes, 2007, p. 2). The primary reason behind Gogol’s inner conflict is the name given to him by his parents who try to name their baby son according to the expectations of the Indian culture. Puri (2015) reveals that “Bengali nomenclature grants every single person two names, a pet name *daknam* and a good name *bhalanam*. Friends and family at home use the former. While the latter is used for identification in the outside world and represents dignified and enlightened qualities” (p. 32). The name-giving point is stressful for the Ganguli couple because they do not decide on a “good” name, an official name, for their baby son, but they request Ashima’s grandmother to give a meaningful name to their baby. The communication process with the grandmother is realized through letters; therefore, the baby’s name is expected to be written in a letter. Although it is confirmed that the grandmother has sent the letter with the name, it has not arrived at its destination. Hoping to receive the letter in a short period of time, Ashima and Ashoke delay deciding on a name for the baby. They consider giving their baby a “good name” to be not urgent. However, they overlook a significant detail. It is America, and they must regulate their lives according to the American rules. They are informed that they cannot leave the hospital without giving a name to their baby. However, they do not have a ready “good name” for the baby boy, and they decide to give their baby a “pet name”, a reality of their culture, to be able to leave the hospital. However, they fail to consider that this name will be the official name of their son in America. As Dawes (2007) underlines, they desire to choose a name for their son which “will add meaning and purpose to his life” (pp. 3-4). They consider that the name chosen for the baby boy would be the most sacred, appropriate, and ideal. Although the Ganguli couple insists on waiting for the name given by the grandmother in India, they must obey the host country’s procedures which require them to give the baby a name before leaving the hospital. Thus, Ashoke and Ashima must decide on their baby boy’s name. Ashoke greatly admires the Russian author Nikolai Gogol, and he chooses “Gogol” as the “pet name” of his baby son. The reason for this admiration is that Ashoke is rescued from a severe train accident with the help of the Russian author’s book. Thus, the book is the source of a new beginning for Ashoke, and he chooses the author’s surname for their baby, bringing joy to his parents in this foreign land. The baby is a sign of hope for the immigrant parents, and the baby’s birth can also indicate a new beginning for the Ganguli family. Contrary to the positive expectations of the parents, the name Gogol does not bring happiness to their son. Rather, it almost becomes the main reason for Gogol’s dissatisfaction and unhappiness for most of his life. The crucial step of name-giving is the source of the protagonist’s struggle to form his identity as an Indian-origin man born in America. It can be inferred that other people’s reactions and attitudes towards his name have the power to influence Gogol’s sense of self. Since he cannot identify himself with his name, which symbolises identity, it becomes a burden for Gogol. It can be inferred that the protagonist cannot establish a meaningful bond with his name, as its origin does not belong to either Indian or American cultural heritage.

His parents inform Gogol that he will use Nikhil as his name at school, where his teachers and other children will know him by this name. Nevertheless, he will still be Gogol when he is at home. However, it is confusing for Gogol who does not want to be named after a new name; it is obvious that “as a child, he associates a new name with a new identity” (Patel, 2018, p. 134). It is not an easy step for a small child, and considering this, Bhullar (2017) points out that this particular decision, which he takes at the very beginning of his kindergarten education, causes Gogol to be exposed to the feeling of discomfort for years, and it is “his first attempt to reject a dual identity” (p. 32). He selects Gogol as his name and rejects being Nikhil with whom he cannot establish a bond. The problem caused by the name(s) of the protagonist can be regarded as a sign of his future dilemmas with regard to the two cultures in which he must form his life. As Caesar (2007) points

Ashoke has given his son two names, two identities, but Gogol must find their meaning for himself ... And with his acceptance and rejection of his two names, he begins a pattern of first accepting and then rejecting outer identities that seem imposed on him by others ... He seems to think he must be one thing or another, Bengali or American, rather than accepting ambiguity and multiplicity. (pp. 108-109)

It is seen that Lahiri portrays a male protagonist struggling between cultural norms and the daily life standards of two different countries by bringing his name to the forefront. Having an Indian origin and a name that is meaningless to Gogol prompts him to search for opportunities to escape from both factors that restrict his sense of freedom. First, he changes his name, Gogol, to Nikhil through a legal decision. The reason for demanding a legal change in his name is that he has always disliked his name (TN, 2004,

p. 102) because Gogol, as a name, belongs to neither American nor Indian culture. It belongs to a totally different one, and this increases Gogol's reaction against his name. Since he does not emotionally know the importance of this name for his father, he tries to get rid of it. The unhappiness caused by his name extends beyond its borders, and thus, Gogol has a life full of dissatisfaction. He is dissatisfied with his name and his life as the son of an Indian-origin family. Hence, he has compared Indian and American cultures and has admired the American culture and lifestyle throughout his life.

A new name means a new person, and Nikhil tries to be different from his previous self. He desires and struggles to behave as a more self-satisfied man; however, he cannot escape from his past. Moreover, "at times he feels as if he's cast himself in a play, acting the part of twins, indistinguishable to the naked eye yet fundamentally different" (TN, 2004, p. 105). He can never be content with himself and his origins, which also affects his social life. It is observed that "Gogol's story is dominated by the effect of his name on his relationships to family, friends and lovers; in other words on his affections" (Heinze, 2007, p. 193). He cannot feel comfortable while uttering or hearing his name. He cannot tolerate being Gogol in his personal, familial, and social life. As a result of this intolerance, "he gets annoyed when his parents call him 'Gogol' in front of his friends, and at same time gets astonished when they call him Nikhil. He is suffering from the dilemma of his dual identity for which he is himself responsible" (Bhullar, 2017, p. 33). Before changing his name to Nikhil, he could not have a serious relationship with women. He even refrains from uttering his own name, Gogol, and this can be seen as an obstacle that hinders his attempts to have a romantic relationship. Since he is not content with his own life, he cannot maintain long-term and happy romantic relationships. It is evident that the protagonist's life is significantly affected by the struggle to find a desirable name amidst the chaos of identity search. After altering his name to Nikhil, he attempts to become a self-assured man seeking freedom from the restrictions of his Indian family. For example, Maxine is one of Gogol's girlfriends. Maxine and her family can be regarded as a step that extends Gogol's feeling of freedom. While he is under the pressure of cultural oppression, Maxine experiences the pleasures of freedom. For this reason, "the more he detaches himself from his family, the better he feels with" (Heinze, 2007, p. 196) Maxine because Maxine's and her parents' lifestyle is possibly the one that Gogol always dreams of, and he cannot prevent himself from comparing the lifestyle of Maxine's family to his family's lifestyle. He prefers to live with them and moves into Maxine's family house, where he even accepts himself as a part of this family. However, his ties to his native culture do not allow him to feel content with his life. Additionally, he cannot feel like Nikhil completely. The state of not feeling complete with either of his identities can be regarded as the reason for Gogol's trouble in establishing a healthy and lasting bond in his relationship with Maxine, which does not last long. Another female figure with whom Gogol has a serious relationship, ending with marriage and then divorce, is Moushumi, who is also of Indian origin, like Gogol. The place of origin and where an individual grows up can be considered crucial in forming an identity. The meeting arrangement between Moushumi and Gogol is made by their parents, and they accept the idea of having an arranged meeting, as two young individuals of Indian origin. Unlike Maxine, Moushumi knows Gogol's past before his name change. For this reason, she is a woman who has information about Gogol's past before he officially becomes Nikhil. Their families know each other and invite them to come together and start a friendship. Due to the fact that familial relationships and ancestors are important according to their cultural heritage, they accept their families' offer, and this relationship progresses in a way which enables them to get married. Gogol and Moushumi have similar national and cultural backgrounds and experiences as second-generation immigrants. This similarity can be sensed by other people, and Caesar (2007) interprets the moment when a waiter thinks of Gogol and Moushumi as brother and sister as "the way in which they are mirror images of one another, versions of the same experience, both seeking identity from material things and from sequential and temporary relationships" (p. 115). Despite such similarities, Gogol and Moushumi are divorced, and Gogol becomes a lonely man again. It is seen that Moushumi does not bring happiness to Gogol, as he remains unable to find a permanent solution to his identity crisis.

As Heinze (2007) reveals, "the entire novel underwrites the impossibility of a monolithic personal and cultural identity drawn from our various names and their meanings in the context of our diverse affections" (p. 200). Gogol's struggle to overcome the identity crisis, namely to find his "self", lasts until his father's death. This event makes Gogol wake up to the realities of his own life, and consequently, an alteration appears in Gogol's point of view regarding his name "as Gogol grows up and becomes aware of his surrounding" (Bhullar, 2017, p. 32). The feeling of being in-between two

cultures and the confusion of having a dual identity leave their place to the awareness that he can develop a stronger personality if he can benefit from both Indian and American cultures. As De points out (2007), “the sense of cultural alienation that he suffers due to his name first makes him lonely, then makes him chart a new mode of belonging, and then finally makes him reconcile to his hybrid and dynamic position within cultures” (p. 188). The transformation in Gogol’s attitude towards his name, in particular, and his life, in general, represents the shift from acceptance to rejection and then to acceptance again. At the end of these phases, he can finally feel a kind of tranquillity.

For the protagonist of the story, “the knowledge and acceptance of his fluid identity both as Nikhil and as Gogol, both as American and as an individual of Indian origin, gives him a strange feeling of stability” (De, 2007, p. 195). The combination of these two lifestyles will make him more advantageous in a world of ceaseless change. Within this context, toward the end of the story, it can be realised that “Gogol grows philosophical. His marriage was failure and then his father’s death was the worst accident. Then we find that Gogol has reconnected himself with the family and drawn right inspiration from his father’s life” (Bhelkar, 2015, p. 76). This inspiration leads to a new process in Gogol’s life. It is clear that “for Gogol, it was difficult to get rid of his namesake, but in the end, he cherishes his namesake. His name was everything of his past, which he came to love – it was his father’s eternal gift to him” (Bhullar, 2017, p. 35).

It is not easy to make out the differences between the two cultures, creating a feeling of in-betweenness for the characters. The older generation does not feel that they entirely belong to American culture, and the younger ones have problems regarding carrying out the cultural heritage of India. The novel can be regarded as one of the finest literary creations representing the difficulties people might face while trying to find a place in a foreign land. Providing two generations, the novel portrays the struggles within a family. It enables readers to acknowledge that the generation gap causes many problems between parents and children in immigrant families, as reflected in fictional creations. These troubles due to the generation gap have become more powerful because of the differences between ancestral heritage and the new land’s lifestyle. However, it is clearly portrayed that if these people in-between two cultures can combine the richness of these cultures, they will certainly be much more satisfied in their personal lives. As Puri (2015) mentions, “identity formation in *The Namesake* encompasses the development of one’s distinctive personality due to specific reasons like new environment, new culture and conflicts” (p. 31). In the novel, Gogol and “all the characters accept their fate and embrace it” (Bhullar, 2017, p. 35). In the case of Gogol, it is seen that “even with all his efforts to the contrary, he failed to ignore the memories of his past, his name, his parents, and his Indian heritage” (Malik & Singh, 2014, p. 353). Thus, he needs another solution to resolve the almost ceaseless struggle that he undergoes from his childhood to maturity. It seems that it is useless to avoid facing the facts about his heritage and cultural background. “In the novel Gogol is not fully in tune with his identity until he realizes that it is embellished by both cultures” (Puri, 2015, p. 36). Gogol can ensure harmony between Indian and American cultural patterns in his life. From childhood to maturity, Gogol cannot stop questioning his self-being, family, culture, and social environment. He needs something to form his own autonomous identity as an Indian-origin individual living in America, and in this regard, “a possible merging of two selves, namely the self of Gogol and that of Nikhil is necessary for the process of self-analysis that Gogol undergoes to identify his real self” (Bhelkar, 2015, p. 79). It is clear that becoming aware of the advantages of experiencing different cultures can be regarded as a solution to the ceaseless struggle to find an autonomous identity while living in a place far from the homeland. Accordingly, it can be underlined that “the reinvention of identity that Gogol experiences resembles a rebirth and a perennial self refashioning” (De, 2007, p. 195). Following his self-realisation, Gogol can continue his life as a self-satisfied man embracing the similarities and differences between Indian and American cultural heritages, thereby forming a hybrid identity in the third space that offers him a new perspective and helps him overcome his identity crisis and the consequent distress. As Yalvaç and Ayan (2025) state, “a hybrid form of cultural formation allows the immigrant characters to handle the burden of being in-between two different cultures” (p. 61). Similarly, Gogol’s identity formation process continues in a much healthier way, primarily influencing his familial and social life, after he acknowledges the possibility of a hybrid cultural identity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In *The Namesake*, Jhumpa Lahiri portrays a picture of an immigrant family by moving deep inside their personal, familial, and social experiences, which include the impacts of two distinct cultures, Indian

and American. The story also represents the cultural clash which plays a crucial role in the characters' the lives. Immigration to a different country may be seen as the starting point of the events that gradually alter the daily routines of the parents in the story. They try to bring up their children in accordance with the cultural norms of their homeland as far as possible. However, they face various challenges that influence their decision-making practices.

The most outstanding decision made by Ashima and Ashoke that influences their son's, the protagonist's, whole life is the naming process which leads to a discussion related to the identity crisis vividly portrayed in the story. Gogol is the name they select for their son, but it does not bring him happiness or personal satisfaction because he cannot identify himself with the name given by his parents. Gogol, as a name, does not have a connection to either his national background or the country where he lives as a second-generation immigrant. He goes through a kind of identity crisis, the intensity of which increases due to his own name. In order to overcome the burden of not having a name that identifies him, he even changes his own name to Nikhil through a legal process. However, this change also does not satisfy him personally because the process of becoming Nikhil from being Gogol causes inner conflict. Following his name change, the protagonist's struggle takes on a different dimension because he must continue his life as both Gogol and Nikhil. It can be stated that his struggle to form his identity as a self-conscious man is a lifelong process. The protagonist's life is presented in the story from his childhood to maturity. As pointed out by Friedman (2008) Gogol's attitude towards his Indian family and his different ethnic background does not change until he becomes an adult person (p. 116).

It is determined that identity formation is a complex process that can be influenced by various factors, and the name of an individual is a significant detail influencing an individual's personal and social development. The complexity of the identity formation process can increase when an individual who is not content with his name continues his life as an immigrant in a foreign land. The reason may be that this individual has to cope with the discomfort associated with his name and also the feelings caused by being caught between two cultures.

In accordance with these outcomes, it is concluded that *The Namesake* is a novel in which Jhumpa Lahiri portrays an individual who must cope with the burden of his identity crisis. It has been detected that searching for identity is a challenging process for him. In this regard, one can infer that the protagonist's main conflict is whether to be Gogol or to become Nikhil, and that this conflict can be resolved only when he perceives the significance of establishing a balance between his familial, socio-cultural, and national values in his personal life.

Statement on the Use of AI Tools

During the preparation of this work, the author used Grammarly solely to improve the language and grammatical correctness of the text.

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